CLAIMS:

1   1.   A method comprising:

2   presenting a user interface that includes a plurality of graphical indicators that

3   represent ranges of options associated with a set of items available from an electronic

4   commerce system;

5   receiving input from a user that adjusts one of the graphical indicators within the

6   respective range;

7   selecting one of the items from the set based on the graphical indicator adjusted by

8   the user; and

9   automatically adjusting at least one of the graphical indicators not adjusted by the

10 user based on the selected one of the items.

1   2.   The method of claim 1, wherein presenting a user interface comprises presenting the

2   graphical indicators to include set points having adjustable positions within the represented

3   ranges, and further wherein automatically adjusting at least one of the graphical indicators

4   comprises re-computing the positions for the set points associated one or more of the

5   graphical indicators.

1   3.   The method of claim 2, wherein receiving input comprises receiving a new position

2   for a set point associated with the graphical indicator adjusted by the user, and selecting one

3   of the items comprises determining which one of the items has an option that most closely

4   matches the set point for the graphical indicator adjusted by the user.

1   4.   The method of claim 2, wherein selecting one of the items comprises selecting one of

2   the items that has options most similar to the set points for a previously selected item.

1   5.   The method of claim 2, wherein one of the options comprises a price associated with

2   each of the items and selecting one of the items comprises selecting one of the items to

3   minimize a change to a price set point for a previously selected item.

1   6.   The method of claim 2, wherein selecting one of the items comprises:

2   prioritizing the set points into higher priority set points and lower priority set points;

3   and

4   selecting the item from the set of items to minimize a change to the positions of the

5   higher priority set points.

1   7.   The method of claim 6, further comprising receiving input from the user that defines

2   priorities for the set points.

1   8.   The method of claim 6, wherein the prioritizing the set points comprises prioritizing

2   the set point that have been recently adjustments by the user.

1   9.   The method of claim 1, further comprising:

2   receiving input from the user to limit the range associated with one of the options;

3   and

4   configuring one of the graphical indicators to limit the adjustable positions of the

5   corresponding set point in accordance with the defined range.

1   10.   The method of claim 1, further comprising:

2   receiving the search criteria from the user; and

3   querying a database server to retrieve the set of items that match the search criteria;

4   and

5   determining the ranges of the available options based on the returned set of items.

1   11.   The method of claim 1, further comprising initiating an e-commerce transaction for

2   the selected item in response to receiving action input from the user.

1   12.   The method of claim 12, wherein initiating an e-commerce transaction comprises

2   initiation purchase of the item.

1   13.   The method of claim 1, wherein each of the items comprise one of a service and a

2   product.

1   14.   A system comprising a user interface software module operating on a computer,

2   wherein the user interface software module presents a user interface that includes a plurality

3   of graphical indicators that represents respective ranges of available options associated with a

4   set of items available from an electronic commerce system, and further wherein the user

5   interface software module selects one of the items based on an adjustment to one of the

6   graphical indicators by a user, and automatically adjusts at least one of the other graphical

7   indicators based on the selected one of the items.

1   15.   The system of claim 14, wherein the graphical indicators include set points having

2   adjustable positions within the represented ranges, and the user interface software module re-

3   computes the positions for the set points associated with the other graphical indicators based

4   on the selected item.

1   16.   The system of claim 15, wherein the user interface software module selects one of the

2   items by determining which one of the items has an option that most closely matches a new

3   position for the set point of the graphical indicator adjusted by the user.

1   17.   The system of claim 15, wherein the user interface software module selects one of the

2   items that has options most similar to the set points for a previously selected item when a

3   plurality of the items match the new position for the set point of the graphical indicator

4   adjusted by the user.

1   18.   The system of claim 15, wherein the user interface software module selects one of the

2   items to minimize a change to a price set point for a previously selected item.

1   19.   The system of claim 15, wherein the user interface software module selects one of the

2   items based on user-defined priorities assigned to the set points.

1   20.   The system of claim 15, wherein the user interface software module selects one of the

2   items based by minimizing a change to the positions of any of the set points that have been

3   recently adjusted by the user.

1   21.   The system of claim 14, wherein the user interface software module comprises a

2   client-side user interface software module executing on a client device, and the user interface

3   software module automatically adjusts at least one of the graphical indicators without

4   communicating with a web server.

1   22.   The system of claim 14, wherein each of the items comprise one of a service and a

2   product.

1   23.   An electronic commerce system comprising:

2   a host computer that executes software to transact reservations for airline flights,

3   wherein the airline flights have a set of available options; and

4   a user interface software module executing on a client computer coupled to the host

5   computer via a network, wherein the user interface software module presents a user interface

6   having a plurality of graphical indicators and user-adjustable set points that graphically

7   define positions within ranges of the available options associated with the airline flights.

1   24.   The electronic commerce system of claim 23, wherein the user interface software

2   module selects one of the airline flights based on an adjustment to one of the set points of the

3   graphical indicators, and automatically re-computes the positions for the set points of the

4   other graphical indicators of the user interface based on the selected one of the airline flights.

1   25.   The electronic commerce system of claim 23, further comprising a server-side user

2   interface software module executing on the host computer, wherein the server-side user

3   interface software module selects one of the airline flights based on an adjustment to one of

4   the set points of the graphical indicators, and automatically re-computes the positions for the

5   set points of the other graphical indicators of the user interface based on the selected one of

6   the airline flights.

1   26.   The electronic commerce system of claim 23, wherein the options for the airline

2   flights include a price, a number of transfers, a total flying time, a time of departure, and an

3   arrival time.

1   27.   A system comprising:

2   computing means for providing real-time tradeoff analysis of options associated with

3   items offered to a user by an electronic commerce system;

4   network interface means for generating a user interface for the computing means; and

5   display means for presenting the user interface to a user,

6   wherein the network interface means includes generation means for generating the

7   user interface to include a plurality of graphical indicators, each of the graphical indicators

8   representing a respective range of available options associated with the items and having a

9   set point specifying a value within the range, and

10   wherein the computing means includes automatic update means to automatically re-

11   compute one or more of the set points and adjust the graphical indicators associated with the

12   re-computed set points in response to input from the user.

1   28.   The system of claim 27, wherein the computing means includes selection means for

2   selecting one of the items from the set of items in response to the input from the user.

1   29.   The system of claim 28, wherein the input from the user manually adjusts one of the

2   set points, and the selection means selects the item having options that most closely satisfy

3   manually adjusted set point.

1   30.   The system of claim 27, wherein each of the items comprise one of a service and a

2   product.